

VZCZCXYZ0006  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAM #2999/01 3071232  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 021232Z NOV 08  
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3767  
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 6097  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3822  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 4003  
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0422  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 5216  
RUEHMS/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 0543  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1546  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 2046  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1383

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 002999

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/13/2018

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [JO](#) [AL](#)

SUBJECT: Jordan Water Conference Cancelled Because of Israel-Arab  
League Dispute

Ref: Amman 2770

Classified by: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Host country Jordan cancelled the Euro-Med Partners Ministerial Conference on Water scheduled to begin on October 28 over disputes about the participation of the Arab League (AL). A Jordanian Foreign Ministry (FM) contact and diplomats in Jordan said the dispute was over the Arab League's desire to participate as a full participant, rather than as a silent partner as agreed at previous meetings. Diplomats expect the issue will be resolved at the November

3-4 ministerial meeting in Marseilles.

Among the conference topics originally scheduled was the Red-Dead canal feasibility study. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Euro-Med Partners Ministerial Conference on Water, scheduled to begin on October 28, was cancelled at the request of the host country, Jordan, on October 25 because of differences over the participation and membership of the AL in the organizing Union for the Mediterranean (UPM). Nabil Masarweh, office director for Jordan's FM, explained to Polchief that the FM cancelled the conference for fear Jordan would be embarrassed by an ongoing dispute between the Israelis and Arab League over participation. The Arab League is seeking an upgrade in its participation, which Israel opposes for fear discussions will become overly politicized. Jordan supports the AL request because the Union would be one more forum in which AL countries, including those that do not recognize Israel, get involved in working level discussions with Israeli counterparts.

¶3. (C) Israel's Deputy Chief of Mission in Jordan Alon Roth-Snir told PolOff that for the last several years, it has been agreed that the Arab League could participate in Euro-Med Partners technical meetings, even at senior levels, but only as observers. It was agreed that the AL would not take any direct initiatives, give speeches, or submit resolutions except through a proxy, which was often Egypt, and that this had occurred. For this conference, the AL insisted on "full participation" despite previous understandings. Israel objected on the grounds that the AL had previously agreed to attend as observers; because "whenever the Arab League participates it turns political"; and because of the weak connection between Mediterranean topics and the many geographically-distant AL members such as Oman and Qatar. He described a similar situation at a water conference in Jordan earlier in the year. This issue is not a bilateral Israeli-Jordanian concern but rather a multilateral one -- which Israel maintains had been long-ago resolved.

¶4. (C) Egypt's Deputy Chief of Mission in Jordan Mahmoud Elmaghraby told EconOff that the AL had proposed many options that would allow

them to participate in a meaningful way. He agreed that a silent observer status was appropriate for technical meetings with scientific experts but was not appropriate for ministerial meetings such as this one. French DCM David Portal told PolOff that the decision to cancel the conference was entirely taken by Jordan. French diplomats in Amman attempted to create an ad hoc understanding among the participants that would have applied just for this meeting, but were unable to do so. They reluctantly accepted the cancellation of the conference, but Portal indicated that French feathers were ruffled by the incident. Elmaghraby and Portal both expected that AL's status would be clarified at the November 3-4 Marseilles ministerial meeting of UPM where the status is an agenda item. Portal further added that the cancellation of the Amman conference had given the French FM "new impetus" to make sure that further protocol bumps in the road would be avoided.

¶5. (U) The conference was to be held within the framework of the Euro-Med partnership now called the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (UPM). It includes the 27 members of the European Union and 16 southern Mediterranean states, including Jordan, Israel and Egypt. Among the planned conference agenda topics was the project feasibility study to connect the Rea Sea and the Dead Sea being led by the World Bank on behalf of Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This Red-Dead canal is part of an international effort to aid the Dead Sea where water levels have been dropping annually at the rate of more than a meter (reftel). The conference program also included other regional water shortage problems with the goal of establishing a long-term water strategy for the Mediterranean region.

Visit Amman's Classified Website at  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman>  
Beecroft